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One of the most reassuring human feelings is that of gratitude. Today I feel fully reassured, being surrounded by so many people who want Grand Valley State College to be an excellent educational institution as it serves students and helps to keep the economy of Michigan and particularly West Michigan vibrant and expanding. There are several faculty and staff members here today, and speaking for them to the rest of you, I express our gratitude for your support, for becoming a part of the venture to which we devote our professional lives. So many of you have done so much and all of you have given your good will. When I consider the amount of time, energy and common sense injected into the workings of the Foundation by our President, Paul Johnson, alone I am awed by the commitment and the value of volunteerism in the life of our college.

At the first meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Grand Valley College Foundation, it was established that the Trustees would receive reports and review all fund-raising projects at
Grand Valley. There were, however, two major objectives accepted by the Board. The first was to increase the endowment fund of the institution, and the second was to provide support and take necessary action to secure an education and research center for Grand Valley in downtown Grand Rapids. I am pleased to report that we are making progress toward the realization of our dream - a center on the Grand. The State of Michigan has funded the first stage of planning and the model in the foyer will give you an idea of how the nine story structure will look when completed. Soon we hope to gain approval for the final planning stage and an appropriation to begin construction. The best of all possible worlds would see the shovels begin their work on the site at Fulton and Front streets next spring. Our hope is that our part of the west bank of the Grand River will buzz with college activity in 1988. The center will open new vistas of opportunity for the people of this area. There is no independent center for research
In West Michigan to assist in the economic and technological development. In a dynamic area such as ours, that is one of the missing elements. I wonder whether the history of the early 20th century furniture industry in Grand Rapids might have been different if an independent, helpful research capacity analyzing the economics, the technology, and the politics necessary for survival had developed at that time. Now we find ourselves in the world center of the manufacture of office systems. The office of the future is being designed and built in West Michigan. This time we will make sure that an independent research capacity in office productivity and all the other elements necessary to support the local industry will be established in our new center.

Our public television station, with a new capacity for local programming, will be in the new building.

Our Office for Economic Expansion that supports local business and industry through training and consultation will be there. Our technology programs, particularly engineering science,
will be there. The Seidman School of Business will offer programs, as will the Kirkhof School of Nursing. Computer science will permeate the building, offering instruction and assistance to businesses and social organizations that request it. I see the building as an economic and social pilot light. What happens there will ignite burners of creative economic and social activity, providing people and expertise where they are needed.

As we move toward the completion of this project we will have to turn to the community for help. We believe a good deal is brewing. It is called by Dick Gillett the multiplier effect, and by Doug Gantos and Casey Wondergem a three fer. For every one dollar donated, we can receive three from another source. We need to raise 6 million dollars for our downtown center, to buy equipment, to build research capacity, to purchase more land, and to develop programs. Previously we raised 1.9 million for the project. We believe the state’s response will be an appropriation in excess of 18 million dollars to construct the center.
WE ARE POISED FOR THE NEXT SIGNIFICANT LEAP FORWARD IN GRAND RAPIDS AND WEST MICHIGAN. IF THE CORE OF OUR LARGEST CITY IS HEALTHY, THE WHOLE AREA WILL BENEFIT. THE GRAND VALLEY CENTER IS EARLY IN THIS NEXT PHASE OF A GREAT LEAP FORWARD. WITH ITS SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION, MORE WILL FOLLOW.